DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 268 604 CS 505 257

AUTHOR Powell, Robert G.; Nicholson, James L., III
TITLE Teacher Affect in the Classroom: Implications and Directions for Future Research.
PUB DATE Feb 86
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Speech Communication Association (Tucson, AZ, February 15-19, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; Behavioral Objectives; Classroom Communication; Classroom Environment; Communication Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Learning Processes; Learning Strategies; Literature Reviews; Research Methodology; *Research Needs; *Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Role; *Teacher Student Relationship; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Communication Behavior

ABSTRACT

Affective communication behavior is central to the teaching-learning process. A review of literature reveals that the affective domain has been viewed primarily as a teacher property rather than as an interactive variable in the process of student learning. However, there is a need for research that explores how affective behavior is negotiated within the classroom environment and serves in promoting cognitive achievement. Desirable research methods include detailed longitudinal observations, interviews, and stimulated recall. Ultimately, a model of teaching behavior that allows teachers to influence consciously learning outcomes must be developed. (DF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED268604

TEACHER AFFECT IN THE CLASSROOM: IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Robert G. Powell, Ph.D.
James L. Nicholson III, Ph.D.
California State University, Los Angeles

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

James L. Nicholson III

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Presentation for the Western Speech Communication Association Convention, Tuscon Arizona, February 15-18, 1986

CS 505257

ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the centrality of affective communication behavior to the teaching-learning process. Research is reviewed which reveals that affect has been primarily viewed as a teacher property rather than as an interactive variable in the process of student learning. The contention advanced in this paper is that research needs to be developed which taps how affect is negotiated within the classroom environment and serves in promoting cognitive achievement. Suggestions for approaching this problem utilizing a variety of descriptive and ethnographic research methods is discussed.

TEACHER AFFECT IN THE CLASSROOM: IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the major contributions from communication research to education has been an examination of the communication variables that influence the instructional context. Much of this research has focused on the communication behavior of the teacher. This research suggests that a variety of interpersonal behaviors influence the instructional process in a positive way. Among the interpersonal variables that have been examined are solidarity, communication style, immediacy, credibility, power, homophily, directive or non-directiveness, self-disclosure and humor. Presumably each of these behaviors is considered an aspect of teacher affect.

Interest in the general domain of affect within an educational context can be traced to Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia's (1964) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook II: The Affective Domain. Affect according to the authors involves "the objectives which emphasize a feeling or tone, an emotion or degree of acceptance or rejection"(p.7). Krathwohl, et al., were attempting to explicate the pedagogical practices a teacher could employ to increase learning in the affective domain.

In communication, researchers have developed a somewhat different interest in the study of affect in relation to classroom learning. Specifically, researchers have attempted to identify what affective communication behaviors are related to teaching effectiveness and student achievement. Our goal here is to (1) briefly review a sample of research which has focused on affect as an important teacher-student interaction variable; (2) outline what research issues need to be investigated if we are to have a more complete view of the affective dimension of classroom interaction; and (3) specifically for this panel, describe how we might study and measure teacher-student affect more effectively.

1. Teacher Affect and Communication Behavior in the Classroom

While a number of variables related to teacher affect have been examined, this review is limited to the following constructs: solidarity, communication style, immediacy, and power.

Solidarity

One of the earliest programs of research on teacher communication behavior was concerned with interpersonal solidarity. Wheeles (1976) was stimulated by the work of Brown (1965) who stated that interpersonal solidarity concerns the perception of being "close or remote, near or far, the in-group versus the out-group." (Brown, 1965, p.57). In operationalizing solidarity, Wheeless (1976) developed a likert type instrument consisting of ten items which reference criterial attributes of solidarity: power, trust,disclosure, credibility, and liking. According to Wheeless "high solidarity relationships refer to those in which 'closeness' derived from 'similarity' finds expression in sentiments, behaviors and symbols of that closeness" (p.48). The aggregation of these indicators references how close the student feels with the teacher. A more detailed study on the relationship between solidarity and student learning conducted by Nussbaum and Scott (1980), found that high levels of solidarity were most positively related to student affect and intentions to behave in a manner consistent with the content taught, but that only moderate levels of solidarity had an impact on student achievement (p.558). A final example of work in this area is detailed by Andersen, Norton, and Nussbaum (1981) who report that better teachers are perceived to demonstrate more interpersonal solidarity and have a more positive communicator style.

Teacher Communication Style

Norton (1977) defines communicator style as "the way one verbally and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered or understood." Among the constructs underlying communication style are dominant, dramatic, animated, open, contentious, relaxed, friendly, attentive, impression leaving, precise, and communicative image. Norton (1983) reports three studies examining teacher communication style. The first study tried to determine which style variables were related to judgments of ineffective and effective teachers. The results indicated that ineffective teachers are not animated, freiendly, precise, relaxed, or dramatic. In fact, the animated/lively variable most strongly differentiated ineffective from effective teachers. A second study was constructed

to determine if specific style variables influenced judgments of teaching effectiveness. The overall results indicated that effective teachers get others to fantasize, tell good stories, and are entertaining. To further probe the effects of the dramatic style a third study was conducted. The results indicated that the teacher with a high dramatic style always scores higher on three variables: (1) uses energy, (2) catches attention, and (3) manipulates mood. Other studies have linked teacher communication style to immediacy (Andersen, Norton, and Nussbaum, 1981; Andersen and Withrow, 1981); and solidarity (Andersen, Norton, and Nussbaum, 1981; Nussbaum and Scott, 1980).

Immediacy

Teacher immediacy is derived from the work of Mehrabian (1969) and refers to the nonverbal behaviors of the teacher which communicate closeness. According to Andersen (1979) who originally extended Mehrabian's construct to the instructional context, immediacy behaviors function to reduce distance between people by either decreasing physical distance or psychological distance. Two instruments were developed to measure teacher immediacy. The Behavioral Indicants of Immediacy Scale (BII) is a 15-item, five step Likert-type summative scale referencing specific nonverbal behaviors considered immediate. The second instrument, the General Immediacy Scale (GIS), is a nine-item semantic differential scale designed to assess gestalt impressions of the teacher's immediacy. Research conducted on immediacy utilizing these scales reveals that immediacy is related to communicator style (Andersen, Norton, and Nussbaum, 1981); affective learning (Andersen and Withrow, 1981); and effective teaching (Andersen, 1979). However, immediacy has not been found to relate to cognitive achievement.

Power

Research on power in the classroom has examined the different strategies teachers use and the implications that those strategies have on affective and cognitive learning. Several conclusions that relate to affective communication have been drawn from this line of research. Kearney, Plax, Richmond, and McCroskey (1985) for example have found that teachers perceive that they employ primarily positive reward-type behavior alteration techniques (BATs). This suggests

that teachers may strategically attempt to manipulate the affective climate in the classroom. Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond (1985) have found that the selective use of BATs was related to generalized immediacy and affective learning. Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, and Plax (1985) also examined the relationship between use of BATs and student perceived cognitive learning. While their results indicate that cognitive learning was associated with BAT use, it is our view that measures of student learning were very indirect at best (e.g., student's were asked how much they learned in class, and if they could have learned more from an ideal instructor) and probably related more closely to affect rather than cognitive achievement. The authors suggest that the use of BATs allow the teachers control of the on task behaviors of students which in turn have positive effects on learning.

Summary

The data from the above studies point to several important findings. The most significant is that the communication behavior of the teacher has an obvious impact on the classroom environment. Cumulatively the data suggests that teacher's affective communication behavior will covary with student judgments of affective learning and judgments of teaching effectiveness. However, there are several issues which remain to be addressed in the search for the role of affect in teacher-student interaction. We shall turn to these important issues in the second section of our paper.

II. Research Issues in Need of Investigation

The first and most obvious issue centers on our inability in communication research to establish a direct connection between teacher affect and student achievement. As noted in the critique by Friedrich (1982) and reflected in the work of Daly and Korinek (1980) and more recently by Staton-Spicer and Wulff (1984), there is little empirical support for explaining how the classroom behavior of teachers promotes student learning. After dozens of studies we have developed only partial causal links between teacher affect and student learning which are generally assumptive in nature and based on very limited measures of achievement, like multiple choice tests and/or attitude surveys (see for example, cognitive achievement measures used by

Andersen, 1979; Andersen and Withrow, 1981; Nussbaum and Scott, 1980; and Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, and Plax, 1986).

Perhaps we should return to our model of classroom learning proposed by Dunkin and Biddle (1974) and examine other dimensions of what are described as process variables. For example, rather than viewing teacher affect as either linear or based on inferential data (i.e., students inferred attributes of teacher affective behavior based on paper and pencil measures), we need to explore what teacher affect is in fact really tied to or a product of as it evolves out of classroom communication. What we are suggesting here is that teacher affect might be viewed as operating "in the service of" other important relational and/or classroom management variables. Research by Weiner (1983) suggests that achievement-oriented behavior comes about when interpersonal affects which are "communicated and exhibited in action," function as attributional cues which influence either the motivational efforts or given abilities of the student (p.70-71). In short, the idea being advanced here is to view affect as a part of a temporal sequence of behaviors (event-cognition (attribution)-affect-behavior) in the movement toward achievement-related goals.

A second issue concerns how teacher affective communication changes or is perceived to change over the course of a term. Flanders, Morrison, and Brode (1968) in two separate studies, reported that students' orientation to teachers and course material grew more negative over time. Evertson, and Veldman (1981) observed 68 junior high school classes and found a deterioration over the six month period. Powell and Arthur (1985) also found that perceptions of teacher affect and teaching effectiveness diminish over a term. Staton-Spicer and Marty-White (1981) found that in the beginning of a term the teacher's verbal behavior reflected a concern for the communication of humaness and fallibility, and that the number of statements influencing these concerns changed over time. Thus it appears that teacher affect may have different consequences and serve different functions over time. The beginning public speaking course serves as an interesting example. In the first part of the course, teacher affect may serve to reduce student anxiety about public speaking while toward the end of the term it may motivate students to examine public speaking further.

Another issue that is related to time concerns the manner in which the teacher manages certain episodes in the classroom. Take for example the research on teacher power. The data consists of mean liklihood of use responses. While this data is meaningful it does not describe how a teacher "prosocially" manages controlling episodes. Over the course of a term, it may be that two or three critical episodes frame the overall perceptions of the teacher(and student). A teacher may be relatively affective, dramatic, and immediate in non threatening classroom interactions, but intense classroom conflict at a critical time in the term (even outside the classroom) may provide an overriding framework for assessing the teacher. An evaluation of a fixed response survey cannot easily sort out these contextual issues.

A third and final issue, and one which is becoming more salient, concerns the culture of the classroom. Much of the data on teaching affect appears to be garnered from somewhat homogenous student populations. Since the ethnic composition of the classroom is dramatically changing, it is crucial that we determine if the strong association between teacher affect and teaching effectiveness holds for students from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds.

III. Future Directions for Research

A final consideration, and one that we see as the most significant in terms of what this panel is attempting to explore, concerns how we observe and measure interactional affect in the classroom. Perhaps the greatest deficiency of the research in classroom communication (from our perspective) is that it does not include a more significant amount of systematic classroom observation. Far too much of the data we collect is typically pen and pencil measures that are taken at one time and related to student achievement at another time. What is needed is detailed and lengthy naturalistic observations of classroom teacher-student behaviors so that we can determine to what extent teachers express affect in the classroom, how aware students are of such affect, and how they interpret this teacher behavior when they do perceive it. Such observation if developed in a comprehensive manner should help us to understand not only how teachers vary their behaviortoward individual students, but

also reveal how the context of interaction should be studied in order to relate interactions to distinct theoretical positions.

There is a distinct tradition in the literature on social science research methods that advocates the use of multiple methods. This form of research strategy is usually described as "triangulation" (Denzin, 1978). We have been very insightful and effective as a discipline when using quantitative methodologies, but we seem reluctant to utilize the enormous variety of qualitative approaches which can reveal considerably more of the intensity and dynamics of an interaction.

Because of the vast number of potential sources of influence on individual perception and performance, it is essential that we begin to collect observational, perceptual, and performance data on teachers and students using a longitudinal design. Incorporating a modified ethnographic and participant observation methodology into such a design allows observation of the same subject over a number of "similar" events, while simultaneously allowing for a degree of variation (for example, seeing how a student reacts differently to two teachers who use different levels of affect). Also, we believe that subsequent classroom research will have more value if observation and participant measures are collected in specific contexts (e.g., observing in the same class for several weeks rather than five days spread out over the entire school year). In addition, we would recommend the use of research which employs detailed interview techniques in order to determine how students and teachers interpret one anothers behavior. For example, if we are interested in what teacher behaviors shape student behaviors, or how teachers and students jointly manage and interpret interpersonal affect in the classroom, more interpretive information should be collected from both students and teachers about the meaning and importance of individual classroom events (e.g., teachers and students could be asked to discuss videotaped classroom episodes, recall their individual interpretations of such events and explain the importance of such events). The potential outcome of this line of research could aid us in describing how students develop beliefs about classroom environments, how such beliefs are altered or maintained, and what beliefs they hold regarding their own achievement.

Conclusion/Implications

We have been concerned in this paper with the centrality of affective communication behavior to the teaching-learning process. We have reviewed a wide sample of research which indicates that teacher affect is an important variable in classroom interaction. However, much of the research to date explores the variable of affect as primarily a teacher property rather than as an interactive agent in the process of student learning. It is our contention that research needs to be developed which taps how affect is negotiated within the classroom environment and serves in the development of cognitive achievement. To this end we have suggested that our research methods incorporate a variety of naturalistic, descriptive and ethnographic approaches: detailed longitudinal observations, interviews, stimulated recall, as well as other methods tied to the requirements of specific cultural and task demands.

Our ultimate goal in all this is in developing a model of teaching behavior which is proactive (Brophy and Good, 1974): where teachers are able to consciously and strategically shape and influence learning outcomes. Unraveling the role of the affective dimensions of communication in the classroom is central to the development of this model. As Darnell (1978) has noted, "we are not just teaching content, or measuring performance on achievement tests, or asking only content questions; rather, we are also promoting inducement and motivation for learning, we are attempting to establish trust, understanding, respect for ideas as well as the way ideas are expressed and a whole range of affective experiences which are at the 'center of learning'" (p.277).

References

Andersen, J.F. (1979). Teacher immediacy as a predictor of teaching effectiveness. Communication Yearbook, 3, 543-559.

Andersen, J.F., Andersen, P..A. & Jensen, A.D. (1979). The measurement of nonverbal immediacy. Journal of Applied Communication, 7, 153-180.

Andersen, J.F., Norton, R. & Nussbaum J. (1981). Three investigations exploring relationships between perceived teacher communication behaviors and student learning. Communication Education, 30, 377-393.

Brown, R. (1965) Social psychology, New York: Free Press.

Brophy, J. & Good, T. (1974). Teacher-student relationships: causes and consequences New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Daly, J. & Korenic, J. (1980). Instructional communication theory and research: An overview of classroom interaction. Communication Yearbook, 44, 515-532.

Darnell, D. (1978). Some basics to get back to: A transactional perspective on teaching-learning. Communication Education 27, 277.

Denzin, N.D. (1978). The research act. New York: McGraw Hill.

Dunkin, M.J. & Biddle, B. (1974). The study of teaching New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Evertson, c.M. & Veldman, D. D. (1981). Changes over time in process measures of classroom behavior. Journal of Educational Psychology, 73, 156-163.

Flanders, N., Morrison, B., & Brode, L. (1968). Changes in pupil attitudes during the school year. Journal of Educational Psychology, 50, 334-338.

Friedrich, G. (1982). Classroom interaction. In L. Barker (ed.). Communication in the classroom. Englewood: Printice Hall.

Kearney, P., Plax, T., Richmond, V. & McCroskey, J. (1985). Power in the classroom III: Teacher communication techniques and messages. Communication Education, 34, 19-28.

Krathwohl, D.R., Bloom, B.S., & Masia, B.B. (1964). Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook II: Affective domain. New York: David McKay, Company.

McLaughlin, M., Erickson, K., & Ellison, M. (1980). A scale for the measurement of teachers' affective communication. Communication Education, 29, 21-31.

Mehrabian, A. (1969). Significance of posture and position in the communication of attitude and status relationships. Psychological Bulletin, 71, 359-372.

Norton, R.W. (1977). Teacher effectiveness as a function of communicator style. In B. Ruben (ed.), Communication Yearbook I, New Brunswick, N.J..: Transaction Books.

Norton, R.W. & Nussbaum, J.(1980). Dramatic behaviors of the effectiveteacher. In B. Ruben (ed.), Communication Yearbook 4. New Brunswick: Trnsaction.

Nussbaum, J. & Scott, M. (1980). Student learning as a relational outcome of teacher-student interaction. Communication Yearbook, 4 , 533-554.

Plax, T., Kearney, P., McCroskey, J. & Richmond, V. (1985) Power in the classroom VI: Verbal control strategies, nonverbal immediacy and affective learning. Communication Eduation, 35, 43-55.

Powell, R. & Arthur, R.(1985). Perceptions of affective communication and teaching effectiveness at different times in the semester. Communication Quarterly, 33, 254-261.

Scott, M. & Nussbaum J. (1981). Student perceptions of of instructor communication behaviors and their relationship to student evaluation. Communication Education, 30, 44-53.

Staton-Spicer, A.Q. & White-Marty, C.R. (1981). A framework for instructional communication theory: The relationship between teacher communication concerns and classroom behavior. Communication Education, 30, 354-366.

Staton-Spicer, A.Q. & Wulff, D. (1984). Research in instruction: Categorization and synthesis. Communication Education, 33, 377-391.

Weiner, B. (1983). Speculations regarding the role of affect in achievement-change programs guided by attributional principles. In J.M. Levine, and M.C. Wang (Eds). Teacher and sstudent perceptions: Implications for learning. New Jersey,: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wheeless, L.(1976). Self-disclosure and interpersonal solidarity: Measurement, validation, and relationships. Human Communication Research, 3, 47-61.